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Minutes of the Municipal Flood and Erosion Control Board

The Vernon Municipal Flood and Erosion Control Board was convened at 11:15 AM, on June 6, 2009, at the Community Room of the Vernon Police Department. All members were present, Jim Hoover, Jim Tedford, Vishnu Khade, and Chris Haddock. D-Day of 65 years ago was remembered.

The minutes of the 9 May meeting were discussed. Vishnu motioned for acceptance, Chris seconded and they were approved unanimously. The minutes of the May 16 meeting were discussed. Jim Tedford motioned for acceptance, Vishnu seconded and they were approved unanimously. It was noted that the attachments to minutes of May 9 are submitted electronically under separate cover owing to photo size limitations of the internet.

The next meeting was discussed. Since vacations and personal commitments interfered with certain dates, the next meeting will officially be scheduled on a will advise basis, but will probably be on September 12, 2009. We may have a short meeting to approve these minutes if a quorum can be achieved. TBA.

Old Business:

Jim Tedford and Chris had attended the FOIA meeting and shared the handouts with Jim Hoover and Vishnu. They stressed that at the meeting the importance of public access was emphasize.

Jim Hoover will follow-up with the town CFO concerning the Downstream Development Fund. A reminder had been sent recently.

Jim Hoover will remind the Town Engineer about the pending inquiry with the Town Attorney concerning access to lands.

It was noted by the Chairman that all previous minutes have been approved and distributed to all appropriate officials and that these minutes can be accessed via the Town of Vernon web site.

New Business:

The Board discussed the possible need for an ID card or other such authorization since we are often noticed by residents of the neighborhoods that we visit. Jim Hoover stated that the town web site listed our names as a part of the board, that a copy of that could be carried on our site visits and backed up by driver's licenses. However, Chris and Vishnu felt that the Chairman should look into the possibility of a letter from Town Hall. Jim Hoover agreed to this in conjunction with the access item under Old Business above.

The Cemetery Road area was discussed from a previous site visit, in that the Town is looking at this area of concern. Funding would be a challenge, the work is needed but we are not certain from where funding would come. We felt that funding was not under the purview of this body.

The board discussed our out of session, personal observations of potential erosion near Overbrook, Valley Falls, Fish and Game Road Bridges; concerns along Merline Drive; and the Center Road/Tracy Drive areas. We decided to make these the focus of our day's site visitation schedule. It should be noted that this was an aggressive agenda for one day and is the reason we have been meeting on Saturdays. We were in session 5 and ¼ hours.

Site Visits:

1. The corner of Merline and Vernwood Drives was our first visit. Jim Tedford abstained from voting on recommendations in order to avoid a possible conflict of interest. Chris pointed out that there was an issue with Cold Patch filler around the catch basin on the corner. The Cold Patch that was used to patch holes appeared to be washing away. **The Board recommends that the area be Hot Patched;** a technique would be more effective. Cold Patching is less expensive, but if reapplication must be done, it is more expensive in the long run. This is akin to Tom Sawyer white washing Aunt Polly's fence, it only lasts for a time and washes away with the rain. We noted also that the loose patch needed to be cleaned up and that this asphalt is plugging up the drain. **The Board also recommends raising the Basin top or grate be accomplished for more effective drainage.**
2. Next we inspected the Hockunum River Bridge at Overbrook Street. We were unable to determine the age of the bridge.

First, we observed the North side. All Board members were highly concerned over the sink hole found on the bridge. **Recommend immediate attention to this potential hazard.** (Note: the Chairman notified Town Officials of this concern soon after the meeting in an e-mail writing.) We note that the sink hole could be caused by the weakening of the culvert pipes (corrugated steel pipes) under the bridge. The Board noted serious cracks and deterioration under the bridge. We note that the asphalt and concrete is disintegrating and we noted vertical cracks in this concrete. **The Board recommends that the Town Engineer review the structural integrity of this bridge. The Board recommends that the Traffic Authority investigate erecting a truck weight limit sign before both entries to this bridge.** None could be seen in the area. It was noted that the side wing concrete wall is disintegrating and spilling. One member noted that during the October 2005 flood that water almost we over the top of the bridge. The Board noted that the crack in the curbing runs to the top of the aforementioned pipe. Stress cracks are of concern.

Second, we observed the South side. We noted that there was a tree on the West bank that was eroding and will no doubt fall and block the water flow.

Recommend the Town remove this tree as a precaution. Additionally, while they are working in this area, **the tree debris on the East bank should be cleared.** (Please see Attachments A-1, A-2, and A-3 for photos of this site.)

3. Next we inspected Fish and Game Road.

First we looked at the North side. Approximately 1/10 of a mile East of Reservoir the water flow curves downstream to the West side. The concern is that if Walker's Reservoir fails (see our 2008 report) this bridge would be wiped out. We noted that the corrugated steel pipe was rotted and the holes have water flowing through them. If the dam breaks, the bridge could be washed away. We noted that the fieldstones holding up the bridge are loose and deteriorated. The bridge and road dips here also. This being a major flood control area, combined with the bad pipe deterioration will be a challenge to this area should flooding occur. Rip rap at the mouth creates a serious erosion situation on the West side owing to weak and eroded condition. The trees in this area are undermined, but are holding the ground soil back at this time. Again, no weight limit signs for trucks are posited. Our concern is that the 80-year lifespan of the galvanized pipe may have been reached. **The Board recommends that, as a temporary measure, a triangular area be made to create another channel, a path of least resistance. We also recommend that the Town Traffic Authority consider erecting a weigh limit sign at each approach to the bridge.**

Second, we looked at the South side. Bridge stones have large gaps and have fallen out. Mud is oozing from the gaps. Rusting of the pipes has begun, but it is not as bad as the North. The abovementioned gaps are causing a slumping of the bridge. A tree is leaning and is causing erosion at its base. Should this tree fall, it would block the road. **The Board recommends a proactive approach in that the Town should remove the tree.** Eroded banks are noted 15 to 30 feet downstream. The Board recommends that this area be cleared so as to stop potential back-up. Our concern is again that the 80-year lifespan of the galvanized pipe may have been reached. It would be less expensive to take precautionary replacement measures than to replace the entire bridge. Again, the age of the bridge is unknown. (Please see Attachments B-1, B-2, and B-3 for photos of this site.)

4. Next we visited Valley Falls Road. At this point Vishnu departed for an appointment, but a quorum was maintained. The specific area we visited was 3/10 of a mile West of Valley Falls Park. The local Ranger warned us of snake infestation. This is where the water flows south from Bolton Notch Pond. There is a bridge over the Tankerhoosen tributary called Railroad Brook.

First we inspected the South side. We noted erosion is causing breakage at the gutter line of the road. Vernon Department of Public Works had placed an orange warning cone on the road where there was a significant dip where water was in the road. The concrete block that made up the bridge headwall was cracking and one part was broken off. Some piping rust was noted. Some other blocks were disintegrating. Water has been pushing through the cracks causing even more deterioration.

Second, we inspected the North side. We noted that the bridge headwall cap is deteriorating badly. Also, the concrete block that makes up the bridge wall near the pipes was missing portions, and it was cracked and crumbling in other areas. The West side of the North headwall was crumbling badly. A wing wall is needed to give stability and control of the water flow. The board noted that the bridge has depressions in at least three places.

The Board Recommends that the Town Engineer inspect this area soonest for structural integrity determinations. (Please see Attachments C-1, C-2, C-3, C-4 and C-5 for photos of this site.)

5. We returned to Lily Lane, which was inspected on 9 May for a short follow-up. We observed that the pipe is now completely covered by the force of the recent rains. The entire basin needs dredging; grass has grown very tall and thick during this 4 week period. It is no longer a maintenance issue; it is clogging the flow which could back up into adjacent properties for which the Town could become liable. The eroded hole is the issue. Further erosion from the hillside, caused by excessive water pressure will soon bring water overflow to the road. The pipe leak needs sealing repair. (Please see Attachment D-1 for photos of this site.)
6. Kenneth and Tracy Drive area. Between 98 and 107 Tracy Drive the Town has a right of way. We looked at the first home where a brook is buried underground from the home across the street to another home area. We did obtain permission from the resident at 107 to step onto their property. The brook originates on West Road and is accessible.

We entered the South and East side. The MFECB team observed that maintenance is necessary to clear rep rap, overgrowth, and fallen flora from the concrete floor of the area. Further up the brook we noted that the default spillway/overflow has under-seepage. Town Engineering needs to determine the cause of this situation.

Downstream to the end we noted that the main drain pipe, the flared end is rotted through and later noted that the other end is in the same condition.

We approached the retention area across the valley is full of poison ivy which prevented our entering that area. We noted another flared end at the upstream end that is also rotted through at the end. Both ends are rotted and need replacement.

The MFECB team notes that the natural flow of the stream has been diverted by debris and silting. **THE MFECB AGREED THAT THIS SITUATION NEEDS ATTENTION.** The pipe will probably fail and should be removed. This entire site is grossly overgrown and inhibits visual inspection..

We entered the South and West side via access to the rear of 93 Kenneth. The chairman introduced the team to the owners, Thomas and Katherine Voss and they allowed us access to their back yard. They were very cooperative, and pointed out several items where they thought problems existed with erosion of their back yard into the ditch behind them that is Town property. The erosion of the stream bank is quite evident for its entire length. Collapsing of the bank is blatant and brush is blocking water flow. Overgrowth and silt build up is overabundant. The residents pointed out and the MFECB team noted that there was a sink hole from the sewer or bank erosion. The residents stated that they had contacted Pete Devico from the Vernon Sewer Plant, who was aware of the sink hole. **THE MFECB AGREED THAT THIS SITUATION NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED.** Overall the residents have a concern about erosion of the back yard from the stream and possibly sewage underground. The residents stated that they had taken photos over time of the eroding condition. They would make these available upon request. (Please see Attachments E-1, E-2, E-3, E-4, E-5, and E-6 for photos of this site.)

7. The MFECB team proceeded to 102 Jonathan and used the right of way to approach the area of concern. This is the east side of the street. The owner of the property gave Jim Tedford permission to enter his property. We observed a drainage ditch with a very large 4 ½ foot pipe. The Headwall is a concrete block which has collapsed on the North side of the pipe. The South side of the head wall is crumbling, loose, and severely cracked. We noted that at the flared end of the base from Center Street water has washed away soil and boulders are bare and dislodged. Mr. Bob Crane, the resident, commented that there was puddling and sogging in his back yard after heavy rain. The MFECB noted that possibly sand has backed up from Center Road into this area. **THE MFECB RECOMMENDS MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR BE SCHEDULED FOR THIS AREA AS IT IS EFFECTING THE RESIDENT'S PROPERTY.**

The MFECB team proceeded to 103 Jonathan, a property that backs up to rails to trails. There is a public access to the area of concern; however, the resident appeared to be home. The Chairman introduced himself and the MFECB team to resident David Schluntz, 872-1363. Unknown to the MFECB, Mr. Schluntz had had ongoing discussions with the town over the eroding condition of the ditch next to his home. He reviewed our credentials, a copy of the Town Board and

Commissions listing. I showed him my personal ID and we discussed the mission of the MFECB as citizen volunteers. Mr. Schluntz accompanied us in reviewing the Town and his personal property. Mr. Schluntz made some valid points and offered photos. He has sent one photo on 17 June which is attached. There were issues of erosion other than that of his concern. The resident's main concern is that his property was eroding away toward his fence. On the other side of the fence is a swimming pool. The ultimate concern for this citizen was that his fence and pool would collapse owing to the erosion creep.

The MFECB team noted that the headwall concrete block was being pushed out. The top of the headwall is cracked; sand and debris are entering the cracks. Back yard erosion is evident and the area should probably be dredged. **THE MFECB RECOMMENDS EXTENSION OF THE PIPE.** The downstream overgrowth is a problem and needs maintenance.

Mr. Schluntz said that he has had mixed observations from Town of Vernon employees. "Mr. Fetko has told me directly that there was no problem." "Mr. Timberman has told me that there is a problem" "Mr. Ron Levesque agreed with Mr. Timberman." (Note: Mr. Timberman is the former Town Engineer.) The way the Chairman understood the resident; there was emotionally charged disagreement between the resident and Mr. Fetko.

The MFECB noted that further back at the trail the culvert elevation of the sewer pipe (trunk line) constricts the amount of water flow. We noted that the culvert wing was cracked. The drain is full of dirt, thus damming the drainage situation. The footing under the road it was noted has a cap that is disintegrating. The fieldstone is bare and the rebar is exposed. (Please see Attachments F-1, F-2, F-3, F-4 and F-5 for photos of this site.)

Adjournment: Owing to the lateness of the hour and the long day of volunteerism, we agreed to adjourn this meeting on-site instead of returning to the Community Room of the Police Station.

Respectfully submitted,

James M. Hoover
Chairman, Municipal Flood and Erosion Control Board

26 Attachments, Site Photos











































